

IV. AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A network based self-help system, constructed by a network communication system connecting a network management center and a plurality of customer terminals, which is characterized in that said network management center in said system is comprised of hardware portions: a network center server, auxiliary PCs or an embedded operation system, network equipment including network cards in server and network cables, and software portions: an information data database, a network management database, an electronic business database, management software, encrypt key authentication and an information safety software package including a firewall or VPN system; said customer terminal is comprised of a customer terminal host and a plurality of customer terminal slaves, said customer terminal slaves are chosen according to the requirements of a local user and are composed with a plurality of terminal server cabinets constructed in a building block architecture and providing different service items and contents; said network communication system is comprised of the Internet, a wired or wireless local area network and computer buses,

each customer terminal slave and each customer terminal host being in communication with the network management center, the plurality of customer terminal slaves providing a variety of items including merchandise and information for purchase by a customer, the plurality of customer terminal slaves including a customer terminal slave information dispenser and a customer terminal merchandise dispenser,

the customer terminal host having a host panel, the host panel including a touch screen display operative for displaying messages or providing information to a customer, a keyboard for inputting data into the customer terminal host, a paper exit for dispensing printed paper from a printer contained with the customer terminal host, at least one card exit, at least one ticket exit, an IC card reader or a magcard reader, a small change machine for dispensing coins and payment means for payment of a selected one of the variety of items purchased, the

payment means including a paper currency receiver for receiving paper currency from a customer and a card receiver for receiving value storing cards or value adding cards, and

when the customer selects information as the selected one of the variety of items for purchase and one of the payment means, the customer terminal host creates an information service request and transmits the information service request to the network management center, the network management center extracts corresponding information from the information database and returns the corresponding information to the customer terminal host, the customer terminal host then performs payment settlement according to the selected payment means, the customer terminal slave information dispenser provides the information to the customer,

when the customer selects merchandise as a selected one of the variety of items for purchase and one of the payment means, the customer terminal host creates real time terminal messages including terminal information data about merchandise remaining stored and available to the customer at the customer terminal slave, a request for the merchandise and an amount of currency remaining at the customer terminal host, the customer terminal slave transmits the terminal information data to the network management center for modification of the network management database based upon the terminal information data, the network management database sends a result to the customer terminal host, the customer terminal host settles payment according to the selected one of the payment means, the selected merchandise is dispensed to the customer from the customer terminal slave corresponding to the selected merchandise, and

when the customer selects the card receiver for receiving value adding cards as payment means, the customer terminal host modifies value adding card information and sends the modified value adding card information to the network management center, the network management center correspondingly modifies data in the electronic business database and sends a result to the customer terminal host, the customer terminal host then settles payment and the selected

one of the items for purchase is dispensed to the customer at the corresponding customer terminal slave.

2. (Previously Presented) A network system based self-help service according to claim 1, characterized in that said information data database is comprised of a database storing all kinds of information collected by the network based self-help system for the local public and a dedicated Internet web site.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously Presented) A network system based self-help service according to claim 1, characterized in that said customer terminal slaves are comprised of 2-6 cabinets of dispensers or card dispensers or information service machines constructed by way of building block architecture, said customer terminal slaves may provide 6-30 service items.

5. (Previously Presented) A network system based self-help service according to claim 4, characterized in that said dispensers in said customer terminal slaves are food dispensers, beverage dispensers or general merchandise dispensers.

6. (Previously Presented) A network system based self-help service according to claim 4, characterized in that the card dispenser in the said customer terminal slaves is a ticket dispenser, a card dispenser, or a combination of them.

7. (Original) A network system based self-help service according to claim 1 or 4, characterized in that said information service machine is an information query machine, a video telephone set, a printer or a photocopier, or a combination of them.

8. – 16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) A network-based self-help system, comprising:

a network management center; and

a plurality of customer terminals in communication with the network management center via a network communication system,

the network management center including a network center server operative with an information data database, a network management database and an electronic business database,

each one of the plurality of customer terminals including a customer terminal host and a plurality of customer terminal slaves in communication with the customer terminal host, each customer terminal host and each customer terminal slave being in communication with the network management center, the plurality of customer terminal slaves providing a variety of items including merchandise and information for purchase by a customer, the plurality of customer terminal slaves including a customer terminal slave information dispenser, a customer terminal slave food dispenser containing food, a customer terminal slave beverage dispenser containing beverages and a customer terminal slave card or ticket dispenser, at least the customer terminal slave beverage dispenser having a temperature adjuster for adjusting temperature of the beverages contained in the customer terminal slave beverage dispenser,

the customer terminal host having a host panel, the host panel including a touch screen display operative for displaying messages or providing information to a customer, a keyboard for inputting data into the customer terminal host, a paper exit for dispensing printed paper from a printer contained with the customer terminal host, at least one card exit, at least one ticket exit, an IC card reader or a magcard reader, a small change machine for dispensing coins and payment means for payment of a selected one of the variety of items purchased, the payment means including a paper currency receiver for receiving paper currency from a customer and a card receiver for receiving value storing cards or value adding cards,

wherein,

when the customer selects information as a selected one of the variety of items for purchase and one of the payment means, the customer terminal host creates an information service request and transmits the information service request to the network management center, the network management center extracts corresponding information from the information database and returns the ~~corresponding~~ corresponding information to the customer terminal host, the customer terminal host then performs payment settlement according to the selected payment means, the customer terminal slave information dispenser provides the information to the customer,

when the customer selects merchandise as a selected one of the variety of items for purchase and one of the payment means, the customer terminal host creates real time terminal messages including terminal information data about merchandise remaining stored and available to the customer at the customer terminal slave, a request for the merchandise and an amount of currency remaining at the customer terminal host, the customer terminal slave transmits the terminal information data to the network management center for modification of the network management database based upon the terminal information data, the network management database sends a result to the customer terminal host, the customer terminal host settles payment according to the selected one of the payment means, the selected merchandise is dispensed to the customer from the customer terminal slave corresponding to the selected merchandise, and

when the customer selects the card receiver for receiving value adding cards as payment means, the customer terminal host modifies value adding card information and sends the modified value adding card information to the network management center, the network management center correspondingly modifies data in the electronic business database and sends the result to the customer terminal host, the customer terminal host then settles payment and the selected one of the items for purchase is dispensed to the customer at the corresponding customer terminal slave.